

ART. XIII.—*Cylindrico-Conical and Cornute Stones.*

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About three hundred of these stones, which have been dealt with by various authors, exist in our Museums in Australia, and probably as many more may be found in private collections. They are roughly circular in section and taper to a blunt point, while the base is often cupped. Some are oval in section, and these are shorter in length, and are curved to one side, comprising the cornute type. The total length varies from three inches to thirty.

The districts in which they are found are well defined, comprising the country drained by the Darling on the East over to Lake Eyre on the West. This includes all the land of the Itchumundi, Karamundi and Barkinji, as described by Howitt,<sup>1</sup> over to the territory of the Lake Eyre tribes, which include the Yaurorka, Ngameni, Wonkonguru and Dieri tribes.

These stones are very variable in their composition. Some appear to have been shaped out of a mass of clay or kopi, as the gypsum is called, others are chipped out of slate or sandstone, but they may be laboriously worked out of felspar or quartzite.

As a rule the surface is smooth but in some distinct markings may be found. These may be divided into classes:—

1. The tally marks, as the short transverse markings have been named. They may be in groups of two or three up to great numbers, or they may be scattered all over the stone.
2. Longitudinal marks. These sometimes are made haphazard over the stone, or may be made singly or in pairs across the shorter tally marks, as if crossing them out or grouping them together.
3. So-called emu feet or broad arrow markings. These are in any direction and may be well cut or simply scratches.
4. Rings round the pointed end of the stones. These are not commonly found.
5. Indiscriminate markings would include the rare radiating grooves cut at the base of the stone, dints where the stone has been used as a hammer, and similar traces.

There have been at least five uses propounded for these stones:—

1. Pounders. This has been the use to which many of them have been put. When one considers the habits of the aborigines one can quite see how any hard broken fragment would be picked up for a hammer.
2. Tooth avulsion.

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1. Howitt. "Native Tribes of South East Australia."

3. It is said that they were used in the ceremonies for producing a better supply of food.
4. To mark the graves. This is undoubtedly true, but the same might be said of any other conspicuous stone, or of oval balls of *kopi*.
5. It has also been asserted that they are stuck into the ground with the base upwards, and that blood is dropped into the cupped base. I can, however, find no absolute proof that this is done. Etheridge, who has very thoroughly investigated their use, suggests they had a phallic significance.

Dr. Howitt, in his great treatise on the natives, never mentions these stones. Sir Baldwin Spencer, in dealing with them, says, "The evidence in all cases is very meagre, and inconclusive." The early settlers say, to quote Dr. Pulleine,<sup>2</sup> "The natives took no notice of them, neither using them, nor avoiding them in any way, and had no name for them."

Quoting Dr. Pulleine again, he says, "Mr. John Conrick, of Nappa merri, Cooper's Creek . . . tells me that, although he has lived there since the early seventies, he has never seen them used, or noticed by natives, and that they are known there simply by the name of Moora."

From my own observations, and from those of Mr. Aiston, who is elder brother to the Wonkonguru people, East of Lake Eyre, we found them recognised by the old aborigines, but not at all by the younger men.

The old men would be from seventy to ninety years old. Their age is calculated by their status when McKinley first came to the district, and by their relative ages. Thus—"me boy, this one man"—when told by a seventy years old man makes the second one eighty. This old man when shown the stones, said "Kootchi, Kootchi, Moora," meaning that they were uncanny and belonged to the Moora.

A most interesting stone is the *Karamoola Yudika*, or circumcision stone. Mr. Aiston has one of these which is slightly broken at the lower end, but is not hollowed at the base. He also sent two to Melbourne. One of them is in two pieces, the other whole. They were all found on the sandhills near Kalamurinna. I showed this one that Mr. Aiston has to my old native friends "Koonkoo Nutaculli," and "Tarkarawikari." They each at once averted their eyes and with palms of hands raised and turned outwards, motioned me away with it saying, "Kootchi, Kootchi" (uncanny, uncanny). They stated "Moora use make'em man," but to Mr. Aiston they have each told the following story. He says:—

"They are supposed to be the *wonto* or penis turned to stone, of someone who died as the result of having been circumcised with a firestick. When the Moora's showed how the operation should be performed with a knife, they brought one each of these stones along. The foreskin was stretched over the point of the stone, which was held opposite to, and in prolongation of, the penis. The stone knife then cut around the end of the stone. After the operation was all

2. Pulleine, Trans. Roy. Soc., S. Aust. Vol. XLVI., 1922,

over, the old man who did the cutting put the *karamoola yudika* under his arm and went away. He was supposed to lose it without knowing where it was dropped. I imagine that his arm tired, and he dropped it without particularly noticing where. If afterwards it was found, the finder covered it up and the place where it lay was carefully noted, so that when wanted again, it could be recovered. These stones were supposed never to be made by man.

"Later it was found that the operation could be performed without the use of the stone, so a small cylinder was employed. This was just held in front of the penis and in prolongation of it. Directly the foreskin was off the stone was dropped on the sand. This substitute was then lost in the same manner as the original. My informant was at great pains to convince me that the aborigines did not make them. The Moora made them, in the same way as he made fossil wood into stone. This old fellow," concludes Mr. Aiston, "nearly fainted when I showed him the *karamoola yudika*. He was horror-struck for the minute, and then told me the above."

At present even the short substitute stone is not used, but a piece of wood, conical in shape, and made like a spear point, is employed.

After the ceremony this is shown to the boy and its significance is explained.

One of the men from Cowarie on the Diamantina had left behind him, at a deserted camp, a box obtained from the homestead containing three *coorie toorooka*, or the mussel shells given to the initiate, a store of *munyeroo* seed, and, wrapt up in a bit of rag, a conical spear point stick. It was plastered thick with red ochre and fat, and it smelt. Evidently these were prepared for the ceremony which is to take place, when the Government bonus for wild dog pups is finished, and the tribe can gather again.

This report has some weak points. The cylindrico-conical stones are found most commonly in the valley of the Darling, and its tributaries.

Here, however, circumcision is unknown, and records of the uses above related are only to be found amongst those who still practise the rite.

There are, to account for this, stories of changes of place amongst various tribes. Thus the Wonkonguru say that they formerly lived north of the Diamantina, but were driven south by the Ngameni. They in their turn displaced the Dieri who now live south of Cooper's Creek.

Something similar may have been the lot of the Itchumundi, Karamundi and Barkinji, who pushed eastward from the Grey and the Barrier Ranges. On the other side of these mountains circumcision is still practised.

Both in weapons and in language there is a remarkable resemblance between those dwelling to the east and those to the west of these mountain ranges.

Take for instance the following list of works quoted from E. M. Curr, *Australian Race*, Vol. II., p. 168.

English.	Darling Language.	Lake Eyre Languages.	Locality.
mother	- Ngamukka	Namika	Mt. Serle
water	- Ngookoo	Nguka	Cooper's Creek
rain	- Mukkra	Mukkra	Mt. Remarkable
kangaroo	- Thurlida	Thuldra	Cooper's Creek, etc.
opossum	- Bilta	Pilta	Widely spread
native companion	- Kooroolko	Booralco	Cooper's Creek, etc.
one	- Nitcha	Ninta	Macumba R.
mosquito	- Koondee	Koontee	Cooper's Creek, etc.
ear	- Uri	Uri	common
mouth	- Yalla	Yalla	Umbertana
fire	- Kulla	Kalla	Marachovie
boomerang	- Wana	Wanna	Beltana
night	- Tunka	Tinka	Cooper's Creek

Then again on both sides of the ranges we find that there are two exogamous intermarrying classes with female descent.<sup>3</sup>

These are bounded on the east and north by tribes with four classes; and on the west and north by those with four intermarrying groups and descent in the paternal line.<sup>4</sup>

The only thing that can be suggested is that a series of dry seasons, or some plague, drove away all the natives from the Darling Valley, from which they fled, leaving the cylindrico-conical stones. There is a tradition, quoted by Commissioner Lochardt,<sup>5</sup> that a second migration took place long ago, when one man with his two wives, Kilpara and Mukwara, occupied the empty country. These two wives gave class names to the Darling tribes,<sup>6</sup> and, judging by the language resemblances, their arrival could have been at no great date. That circumcision would not be practised amongst these immigrants would, as Curr suggests, be obvious, because the small party could not afford to lose any of its members and food for all was assured.

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5. R. Etheridge, *Jun. Mem. Geolog. Surv., N.S.W.*, pp. 1-4.
6. Mrs. Rankin, *Science of Man*, Aboriginal grave at Terragon.
7. R. Pulleine, M.B., Ch.M., *Trans. Roy. Soc., S.A.* Vol. XLVI., 1922.

3. Howitt, *loc. cit.*, p. 90.

4. Spencer and Gillen. "Northern Tribes of Central Australia." p. 74.

5. Curr., *Australian Race*, Vol II., Book 7.

6. Howitt, *loc. cit.* p. 97. Curr, *loc. cit.*